

PRO/CON: Did Hurricane Harvey show the reality of climate change?

By Wayne Madsen and Whitt Flora, Tribune News Service, adapted by Newsela staff on 09.12.17

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In this aerial photo, a neighborhood near Addicks Reservoir is flooded by rain from Tropical Storm Harvey on August 29, 2017, in Houston, Texas. Harvey set a record for rainfall from a tropical system in the continental U.S., dropping 51.88 inches just outside Houston, an eighth of an inch behind the U.S. record set in Hawaii in 1950. Parts of Houston may be flooded for another month. Photo by: AP Photo/David J. Phillip

PRO: Yes, Harvey shows climate change is real

Most scientists say climate change is real. It is causing terrible storms. Hurricane Harvey is just the beginning.

Temperatures are warming in the sea and the air. Scientists say people burn too much fossil fuel. Fossil fuels come from nature. They include fuel from wood, oil and coal. Burning these fuels creates greenhouse gases. The gases become trapped in the air above. They store heat, making the world hotter. Scientists call this global warming.

Hurricane Harvey heavily flooded parts of Texas. These parts were once thought to be safe from flooding. Highways were turned into rivers.

The flooding of Texas is not a one-time event. Recently, powerful rains hit South Asia. Flooding killed 1,200 people. Millions were made homeless. Cities in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan went under water.

In July, heavy rains hit Istanbul, Turkey. It turned streets into lakes.

With great climate change, the world is seeing historic storms more often.

Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005. It was like what Harvey did to Houston this year. The effects will be long-lasting.

Superstorm Sandy hit New York City in 2012. Flooded subways in Manhattan looked like shots from a movie. They were real life.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is a government group. It studies the weather. The group has counted about 15 major Atlantic storms each year from 1995 to 2012. That is more than years past. This was blamed on warming oceans.

Huge ice formations in Antarctica and the Arctic are melting. It will cause flooding on the coasts.

Sea creatures have seen their food and homes change greatly. This will make it harder for them to survive. Later, this will affect humans, who need these sea creatures for food.

President Donald Trump doesn't believe global warming is real. He says the Chinese made it up.

The president owns a fancy building in Palm Beach, Florida. It is called Mar-a-Lago. Ocean waters in Florida are rising. Mar-a-Lago could be flooded. Maybe then, he might understand that he is putting the world in danger.

Wayne Madsen's writing has appeared in newspapers around the world.

CON: No, hurricanes have plagued Texas for a long time

Many newspapers and TV news shows said Hurricane Harvey was caused by climate change. They were praised for this.

Many scientists across the country say the same. But they are all wrong.

They say climate change will make extreme storms worse. They're making angry calls for more government action.

Bad weather often hits Texas' Gulf Coast. But it has nothing to do with climate change.

Consider what happened in 1900. The worst hurricane in American history hit Galveston, Texas. It destroyed thousands of buildings. It killed about 6,000-12,000 people. Harvey, so far, has caused less than 100 deaths.

Cliff Mass is a weather scientist at University of Washington. He said climate change did not cause Hurricane Harvey.

William Happer studied energy for the U.S. government. He is also not sure about global warming as it is explained by newspapers.

"Climate has been changing since the Earth was formed," he said.

"The climate of Greenland was warm enough for farming around the year A.D. 1100," he said. By 1500 the Little Ice Age came. There was no way to fake this, he says.

Debates between people like Happer and other scientists will continue.

In the meantime, thousands of Texans are homeless and hungry.

Whitt Flora is a journalist from El Paso, Texas. He has written about government affairs for The Columbus Dispatch.